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THE
CONNEXION
BETWEEN
Industry and Property;
OR A
PROPOSAL
TO MAKE A
Fixed and permanent Allowance
to LABOURERS,
FOR THE
MAINTENANCE of their CHILDREN.

ADDRESSED TO
The Society for bettering the Condition and increas-
ing the Comforts of the Poor.

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THE
CONNEXION
BETWEEN
Industry and Property, &c.

IF men wish effectually to reap the advantages of civilization, they must adhere firmly and invariably to such general principles as are capable of uniting all the parts of society in a common interest.

One of the principles adopted with this view by the civilized world, is property ; intended to act by its impressive stimulus

on all parts of the community, and to excite that industry, which produces all the food and all the comforts of life.

To effect so comprehensive a purpose, the animating influence of this principle must extend from the cottage to the palace ; and thus producing general advantage, must insure to itself general protection.

Common labour should procure subsistence ; labour, ingenuity, and economy, more than common, should lead to property ; the unrestrained exchange and transmission of this property should continue the stimulus, and be productive of individual, which, in the aggregate, is national prosperity.

That this general influence of property on industry, is often obstructed, and, in some instances by regulations originally intended to assist it, is a truth known to
every

every man of observation ; but the present address has solely for its object, to point out one of these instances—the misapplication of the relief distributed to the poor.

I have long seen, with equal astonishment and regret, that the immense sums expended annually for this benevolent purpose, have produced so few beneficial effects ; and I have been convinced, that such unsatisfactory results from efforts so liberal, must have proceeded from a radical defect in the mode of administering the relief.

This defect and its cause, appear to me equally evident ; and your reports, to which so much respect and gratitude are due from the public, confirm my opinion, that the present principle of distribution, instead of co-operating with the hope of property, to excite industry, counteracts this great spring of useful action.

The price or reward of the labour exerted by an individual, cannot be sufficient for the maintenance of a large family.

This price must always be regulated by the work done, without reference to the particular circumstances of the person labouring; the same quantity or quality of work must deserve the same price, whether executed by a single man, or by the father of six children.

If therefore any additional burthen, such as the maintenance of children, be imposed on labour; its price must either be generally raised, and thus exceed what is requisite for a single man, or the father of a family must remain incapable of supporting that family from his labour: it is therefore evident that wants arising from particular situations, such as children, age, sickness, or infirmities, must be
supplied

supplied from the general wealth of the community.

But it is equally apparent, that if the relief which the community grants for the objects above mentioned, be distributed, not in proportion to those wants, abstractedly considered, but in proportion to a very different criterion, namely, a deficiency of earnings, then all these allowances tend to depress, not to encourage, industry.

An attentive consideration of the state of labourers, confirmed by the opinion of those who, in the administration of parochial relief, have been most conversant with their distresses, induces me to propose, *that a fixed national allowance should be made to every labourer, of one shilling weekly, for every child under ten years of age; not as alms, not as a humiliating badge of incapacity, but as an honourable contribution of the society at large, towards the support of the rising generation.*

In

In considering the mode of relief now prevailing, and that which I suggest, the results will be found exactly opposite.

If the community assume as its principle to ascertain the earnings of a man with six children, and to supply the deficiency required for the maintenance of the family, it is obvious, that though the amount of this deficiency may be varied by the increased industry of the man, yet his own situation cannot be improved. If, for example, he work in a degree to maintain himself alone, the deficiency is supplied for the maintenance of the six children: if he exert himself sufficiently to maintain two children, he receives subsistence for the other four: should he by additional industry maintain this latter number, then two only regulate the proportion of allowance.

What

What inducement has such a man to increased exertion? The least and the greatest activity lead to a similar result; can it be surprising that, under such circumstances, he possesses no industry, no energy; and that every occasional profit is immediately dissipated; for if he save on the one hand, he loses as much allowance on the other: thus the chief spur to industry is, with respect to him, non-existent; he has no fair prospect by any effort, by any economy, to realize property,* and he cannot therefore be interested in the protection of that from which he can derive no enjoyment.

Let us reverse the case! Let the allowance to this man, as far as relates to his children, be determinate; then his income will rise and fall in proportion to his industry: common labour will be sustenance to him—the allowance sustenance

* See Davies and other writers on the state of poor families.

nance to his children ; increased labour or unusual ingenuity will leave a surplus : a saving of that surplus, no longer counteracted by a decrease of allowance, will be natural and probable ; there will then really exist a relation between industry and property ; and the labourer will feel the interests of his family interwoven with the preservation of the state.

At present, clogged as labour is with the maintenance of children, the price is neither adapted to the single, nor to the married man ; and both, thus disproportionably supplied, are led alike to the haunts of intoxication—the one by superfluity, the other by despair : on such a system the father of a family (a state, which, of all others in the community, best deserves encouragement ; a state the most natural, sober, and virtuous ; the most attached to industry and order) is bereft of the energy of independence,

dependence, by losing the cheering hope of property.

If it be congenial to our natures that we should be differently affected by the contemplation of happiness or of misery in others, or that we should desire security and tranquillity for ourselves ; we must cultivate some common bond of union between all classes of society ; we must clear all the channels thro' which property circulates, that each rill may feel the height of the flood, in its just proportion to the broadest stream.

All must be anxiously desirous to see the rising generation educated in habits of sobriety and prosperous industry : from whom can we expect that constant and affectionate attention towards children, which alone can instil and foster such habits, but from the parent ? Yet how can we now hope to find, amongst the labourers, this solicitude, when scarcely any effort can avail to improve their condition,

dition, or that of their offspring? Can we look for examples of virtue, sobriety, and economy, under that roof, where virtue and vice terminate alike in hopeless dependence?

That so many parents have lately exhibited examples of affections estranged from their natural tendency, is alone sufficient to prove that there is something radically and miserably wrong in our present system.

Let those who complain of immorality in the lower classes, reflect how naturally the regard for property is strengthened by the hope, and weakened by the despair of obtaining it; let them consider what has been so admirably expressed in the preface of your reports, *that of every species of idleness, hopeless indigence is the most inveterate.*

The

The present laws afford relief to labourers with large families, only when they declare themselves paupers : by that act relinquishing for ever the honorable pride which sweetens and invigorates exertion.

If an honourable assistance were advanced to them at an earlier period, a spirit would be preserved, which might soon provide for its own wants ; if this fostering aid be denied, a greater expence must be incurred, without a similar advantage ; not only parents, but their children, educated under a sense of degradation, will probably be perpetual burthens to society.

An objection may be started, that the allowance should cease when the parent shall have obtained a certain portion of property ; but it is obvious that such a measure would destroy the beneficial effect : were the emoluments arising from
economy

economy to be counterbalanced by a decrease of allowance, we should revert to our present situation, and no savings would be made.

I think that many individuals, after a few years, would, with a generous spirit, relinquish this assistance; but in no case should it be withdrawn unless at their own request.

That relief which is discretionary, and requires a local examination, must inevitably remain parochial, to guard against unlimited profusion; but the allowances I propose for children, depending solely on the proof of their existence under the specified age, should be national, and totally separated from parochial cases of age, infirmity, and sickness.*

If

* These cases of parochial relief do not come within the scope of this address; yet can I not avoid observing,

If in addition to this fixed, honorable, national allowance, which I have proposed for children, were added a perfect freedom for labourers to engage themselves wherever they could best find employment, to quit a declining for a more prosperous branch of industry; in a word, if the disposal of the property of labour were to be as free as the disposal of other possessions, the price would find its natural level; procure ready employment

observing, in a cursory manner, that the assistance afforded would lead to effects infinitely more satisfactory, if we adopted some fixed principles of allowance, in lieu of calculating the earnings of those who are to be relieved.

If a person labours under some bodily infirmity, which renders him less able than a person in health, in the proportion of one or two shillings a week, what objection can be offered to his receiving a fixed allowance commensurate to his inability? By this regulation the man's exertions remain under the natural stimulus of property; and if he earns more than in his circumstances could be expected, this surplus is so much food or other benefit, gained to the community; but if we enquire on the contrary what he earns, and as he earns more, allow him less, why should he exert himself?

ment in agriculture and manufactures, and seldom, if ever, would it be necessary to provide occupation for any man.

Your reports, and the various proposals made in all parts of the kingdom for accommodating and assisting working men, and for furnishing them with means for improving their property in the early stages of its accretion,* shew that nothing is wanting to their prosperity but the power of establishing that foundation on which the superstructure is to be raised, by a continuation of exertion and economy.

When fathers of families can save something from wages, friendly societies will increase and flourish.

Then, the acquisition of garden plots,
of

* See a late excellent publication of William Morton Pitt, Esq. relative to the provision of cottages for agricultural labourers.

of cows, and other means of increasing his comforts, will be within the reach of the sober and prudent labourer; because either individuals or societies will be encouraged to afford him assistance, by a fair prospect of safety to the persons who make the advance, and of permanent benefit to the person assisted.

Then, the impositions so frequently complained of in mills and shops of various descriptions, will find a considerable check, because an independent man can transfer his custom to those who will serve him honestly.

Then, work by the job or the piece would become more general: this mode of employment, besides affording the habitual pleasure which we all feel when acting for ourselves, combines also, better than any other, the interest of the labourer with the interest of society, by exciting him to produce the greatest

C *quantity*

quantity of work. This desirable mode of labour is now impeded because too little trust can be placed in the *quality* of the work so done: but how essentially would this impediment be diminished, when the labourer should feel himself resting on his good character for his future rise in the world.

Vice, and particularly that species of it which invades the property of others, can only be held in detestation by all, when all feel the general benefit resulting from the inviolability of possessions.

I am not so sanguine as to expect, from the most beneficial arrangements, great immediate effects; I know the force of custom, and am aware that many labourers have acquired bad habits, which time only can correct; yet am I convinced that the change I propose is so essential and justly founded, that with the assistance of some regulations relative to cleanliness,

cleanliness, white washing, &c. the present too common appearance of filth, discontent, and poverty, would, ere long, give way to neatness, animation, and content.

The attempt to impose on the wages of one person the maintenance of many, only tends to overwhelm the fathers of families, and to repress their own and their children's industry.

The general idleness and misery thus created, we endeavour to palliate, by enormous poor-rates, which, as the mode of distribution carries no principle of cure, are increasing with accelerated motion, and reducing the middle classes of society to the same state as the lowest.

A fixed allowance for the children, will leave the parents to reap fairly the fruit of their labour, and inequalities of advantage will follow the inequalities of exertion :

exertion : then will be re-established the action of property on industry.

We protect property in its most distant ramifications, and must not surely suffer the trunk to decay !

It is only by encouraging an unimpeded circulation of the vivifying juices, from the root to the utmost extremities, that we can enliven and invigorate the whole !

Exeter, April the 7th, 1798.

